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The first part of Les Pattison's reminiscences of North Africa appeared in the supplement to the Fall 2006 newsletter.

Training for the invasion of Sicily now followed for which we took part in the exercises at Djelli before leaving for Bizerta where we embarked for Taranto on an American LST. Apart from almost colliding with a merchant ship in the dark during a storm and the US Navy firing at a mine floating in the water, the trip was uneventful. It was now October and we had been abroad for the best part of a year.

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After disembarking in Taranto we were fortunate that our gun was sited on the Rotunda opposite the Governor's Palace. On Sunday as the local people paraded up and down the "Lingomare" many often stopped to talk to us to improve their English.... .. While stationed at one of the airfields where the American Liberators used to leave for the oil fields in Ploesti, Romania, I made a trip in one of them as they went to Rome to pick up the survivors of JJ for Jenny who had been badly shot up on their return from the mission. Never having been to Rome I lay in the nose and recognized many of the well-known buildings. On our return to Lecce we flew over Vesuvius where I had a wonderful view into the crater.

January it was decided that some of us would have to become PBI (Poor bloody Infantry) as the anti aircraft was not really needed. So we found ourselves in Amandola in the foothills of the Sibilini mountains. The weather was quite severe, cold and plenty of deep snow actually leaving us cut off for a week, which meant my missing seven days leaves in Florence. Despite the disappointment we enjoyed the life as there was no gun to man, just the odd guard duty. Evenings were spent with an Italian family or playing bingo in the school which was run by three Nuns.

The war finished before we had completed our training and I had sand fly fever resulting in hospitalization. On my discharge I found that I had been posted to GHQ O2E where I could enjoy horse riding at AFQC Caserta. One of the perks was that I could get the odd job of taking rations to the Officers on leave in Capri. It also meant that I could spend two nights there before returning to HQ... ..But all good things must come to an end and as I joined an RAF pal who was also returning home we went to say 'ciao' to the girls when up turned Colonel Marshall in his car to take Maria Maioni to the Officers club. Little did he know that when he was in Athens or Vienna, Lily and I, along with Maria Maioni had used his car!